

Greetings Delaware Shorebirders!

Even with the Delaware Bay water temperature well below the ideal for spawning we are seeing signs of spring, there are increases in the flocking behavior of Dunlin and I have personally begun to see small groups of Red Knot down on Virginia's Eastern Shore! Hopefully the weather will cooperate and we will have Horseshoe Crab spawning by the time the shorebirds begin to arrive. We are already planning for another successful season! We capture the birds to monitor their condition and get weight data to evaluating their weight progression through the season. We will also be applying coded leg flags and spending time searching for those flags (resighting). This is a tremendously fun experience for those of you who haven't made it out yet. During this time we also estimate flock size and do other work to better understand the size of the population staging in the Bay. We do try to get everyone into Mispillion Harbor (the best place to do resighting) at least once. It is truly an amazing experience!

Your help is important...

The data collected during our monitoring efforts is as important now as it has ever been. In 2007 Red Knots were designated as a "Candidate" species under the USFWS's Endangered Species Act. At the time, it was given a priority level of 6. In 2008, its priority level was upgraded to a level 3, the highest a migratory species can attain. This past September USFWS proposed listing the Red Knot as "Threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. This past fall the US Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Red Knot as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. It is with the strong scientific data you help to collect that contributes to making conservation decisions such as this possible.

All of the work conducted and data collected by the volunteers of the DE Shorebird Project is critical to furthering our understanding of Red Knots and other shorebirds that migrate through the Bay in the spring. I am hopeful you will be interested in helping out by volunteering with the Delaware Shorebird Project this year. The success of this project and shorebird conservation in Delaware depends heavily on your help during the short migratory period. We need people to help on processing teams after a catch is made, to help resight individually marked birds, and to help with other daily aspects of the project. Basically, there is something for volunteers of all skill levels and abilities to do! If this sounds like a good time and something you would like to do, please become involved!

Details...

We have again secured the house in Slaughter Beach as a base of operations during the field season and will be there from May 7 through June 3. Limited space is available so

please let me know if you would like to stay overnight so we can work to accommodate you. We work

7 days a week to collect all of the data needed during the short migratory period so there is always something to do at a time that will fit with your schedule. We do ask that you try to contribute at least 3 to 4 days to the effort. This amount of time is intended to expose you to all aspects of the project and give you an opportunity to develop your skills in resighting and banding teamwork. Plus, it's just plain fun!

I am happy to announce that we will again have the assistance of talented team leaders Gregory Breese (USFWS) and Jean Woods (Delaware Museum of Natural History) the project is ensured excellent leadership for another quality field season! The Project would not run as smoothly as it does without them!

Our online training modules are available and I encourage you to review them. We will have a short orientation when you arrive to the field station in Slaughter Beach but most of the training will be in the field when we are actually collecting data. What better way to learn than with birds on the shore or in the hand!

What to do now...

- Plan to come to the Bay! Please send me an email indicating the dates you would like to volunteer so I can put you on the schedule. I am looking to have a team of about 10-15 volunteers per day.

- Brush up on your species ID's

- Review the training modules and other information on our website at www.fw.delaware.gov/shorebirds. You can also find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Delaware-Shorebird-Project/116129065093576>

Contact...

If you have a question and need more information or to let us know when you will be able to help, please contact me at (302)735-8679 or by email at deshorebirds@gmail.com. We will again have a volunteer contact phone during the season and I will send that number when it is available. If you are on Facebook, do a search for Delaware Shorebird Project and "like" us! We will be posting updates there as well.

I hope to hear from you and look forward to seeing you on the beach in May!

Bracken Brown

DE Fish and Wildlife Shorebird Project